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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SECURITY COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS ON THE
SITUATION IN GEORGIA

REF: USUN 102

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. In closed consultations on February 10, all Security Council members except the Russian Federation identified a continuing need for a UN presence in Georgia, at least on an interim basis, which would ensure security and stability pending consultations on a comprehensive security regime between the Secretary-General and the parties. SRSG Johan Verbeke emphasized that the main prerequisite for a successful future UN mission would be a clear security regime, including limits on military personnel and the definition of security zones on both sides of the line of conflict. Verbeke said both Georgian and Abkhaz leaders would want a continued UN presence in Abkhazia, but they have different views as to its proper role. Russian Ambassador Churkin did not mention the need for a continued UN presence during his remarks, and he urged the Council to accept the "new realities" that were created on the ground after the August 2008 conflict. In another closed consultation session later on February 10, France distributed a draft resolution as a Group of Friends agreed text. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Johan Verbeke, told the Security Council during closed consultations that Abkhaz and Georgian leaders had both expressed support for a continuation of the UN mandate in Georgia, albeit in different forms. He said the Georgian side views the UN presence as a necessary complement to the EU presence, and would want a revised UN mission to engage in military monitoring and policing, particularly in areas of Abkhazia with large ethnic-Georgian populations. Verbeke said his understanding was that the Georgian side wanted another technical rollover of UNOMIG in order to provide an opportunity to work out the elements of a new mandate. He said that the Abkhaz de facto authorities also wanted a continued UN presence as a way to ensure security and stability in Abkhazia, but viewed a future UN presence as focusing more on "post-conflict" humanitarian concerns and working with ethnic minorities. According to Verbeke, the Abkhaz and the Georgians had been close to agreement on a "5-sided" incident response and investigation mechanism (i.e., UN, EUMM, Russia, Abkhazia, Georgia) at the last Geneva meeting, and he hoped they would reach agreement on this at the upcoming February 17-18 session.

13. (SBU) Verbeke said that the conditions for UNOMIG to carry out its operations were fundamentally different than they had been before the August 2008 conflict. As a whole, he thought UNOMIG was able to execute its mandate "in a satisfactory manner". However, with the underlying security regime of the former Moscow Agreement no longer in place, the status of UNOMIG was, "at best, unclear". He stressed that UNOMIG, which had formerly relied on CIS peacekeepers for force protection, was now dependent on the good will of the parties for their own security. Verbeke emphasized that the most important prerequisite for a future mission would be a clear security regime, including quantitative and qualitative

limits on military personnel, and a defined security zone. He thought the Security Council would want to endorse the elements of a new security regime, which would need to be worked out with the parties. In the interim, he hoped that the parties would adhere to the basic elements of a regime such as had been set out in the February 4 2009 SYG's report.

¶4. (SBU) In response to Verbeke's briefing, all Security Council members except Russia voiced support for continuing a UN presence in Georgia/Abkhazia, at least on an interim basis, in order to maintain security and stability and to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). "Western Friends" members Croatia, France, and the United Kingdom reinforced the need to find a security mechanism on both sides of the cease-fire line from the 1994 conflict. France expressed concern at the humanitarian situation and mentioned the necessity of Russia and Georgia complying with the terms of the International Court of Justice ruling from October 15, 2008, regarding discrimination, freedom of movement, and the protection of property of IDPs and refugees. The United Kingdom expressed concern about the buildup of forces along the administrative border between Abkhazia and Georgia-proper, and noted the responsibility of the Russian Federation as an occupying force to protect civilian populations in Abkhazia. Croatia called for a renewed UNOMIG mandate and emphasized the need for all parties to cooperate with the UN mission.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Rice agreed with the SRSG's assessment that the security situation remained volatile. She cited the heavy buildup of artillery on the Abkhaz side and the construction of Russian fortifications. She reinforced the need to maintain international monitoring on both sides of

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the cease-fire line and mentioned the importance of the Geneva talks as the appropriate forum for all parties to present their views on a comprehensive security regime. She also reinforced the need to address the issues of the return of IDPs and refugees and urged the Secretary-General to be vigilant in investigating reports of human rights violations.

¶6. (SBU) Mexico made a strong statement in favor of keeping a UN presence, and said a comprehensive mandate should include monitoring the cease-fire, providing humanitarian assistance, assisting in the return of IDPs, acting as a liaison among the parties, preventing trafficking in persons, and implementing confidence building measures. Turkey called for an "effective, uninterrupted UN presence, at least for an interim period", noting that it was encouraged by the prospect that the "Group of Friends" would soon produce a consensus draft resolution. Austria mentioned humanitarian concerns and said an EU international human rights fact finding mission would soon be traveling to the region. Uganda supported the continuing presence of a UN mission in the region as well as the discussions underway in Geneva. Japan also reinforced the need for a continuation of the UN presence on an interim basis, pending discussions in Geneva on a more comprehensive security regime.

¶7. (SBU) Council members China, Vietnam and Libya, who were often silent during Georgia consultations in the immediate aftermath of the August 2008 conflict, all voiced support for maintaining a UN mission on an interim basis and for continuing negotiations among the parties through the Geneva talks. China emphasized that maintaining peace and security was the responsibility of "both parties", and endorsed a UN presence that would maintain security with the agreement of "all sides." Vietnam encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to work with the parties to define a security regime, acknowledging the current difficult security situation. Libya reaffirmed "all initiatives" to reach a consensus on a revised mandate and supported the Secretary-General in continuing negotiations with the parties, despite their divergence of views on more permanent security arrangements.

¶8. (SBU) Russian Ambassador Churkin did not mention the need for a continued UN presence in his remarks. Instead, he criticized the SYG's report and SRSB Verbeke's briefing as being "imbalanced" and "biased against the events in the region since August 2008. He also criticized UNOMIG for focusing its monitoring on the Abkhaz side of the boundary with Georgia, saying, "UNOMIG had 98 meetings since August with Abkhaz forces, but slightly more modest activity on the Georgian side." Churkin cited the "new realities" that had been created after the August conflict, including the "Medvedev-Sarkozy" plan, which Russia characterized as giving the EU responsibility for the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He also said that Russian forces were in Abkhazia under a bilateral agreement, and that Russian armed forces acted as a guarantor of Abkhazia's security. He denied that Russian forces were engaged in implementing any control over freedom of movement in Abkhazia, but allowed the possibility that Abkhaz forces might be involved in such activity. He also conditioned facilitation for the return of "refugees" on an agreement from Georgia not to use force.

¶9. (SBU) After further discussions among the Group of Friends on the elements of a resolution, France, reconvened the Council later in the day on February 10 in order to distribute the draft Security Council resolution to extend the UNOMIG mandate (see Reftel).
Rice